"The G[illegible] Universities and The War"

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THE CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE WAR.

Canada with a population of eight millions had before the war 14,000 students of whom 10,000 were men and 4,000 women. These students are drawn from all circles of the people and from all sections of the Provinces, and therefore are thoroughly representative of Canadian opinion. Convictions which take hold on the students soon react upon the country. It was therefore of the utmost importance that from the earliest moment the meaning of the war was clearly set before the students in the Universities and quickly grasped by them. The effect was influential in creating sentiment throughout the country.

No section of the community has contributed a larger share of their best to the war than the Universities. There are already more than 12,000 members of these Universities, including graduates, former students and undergraduates, on active service, of whom 6,000 are undergraduates, and 400 are members of the teaching staffs. Nearly 800 are on the roll of the fallen.

As the war has proceeded the attendance in the Faculties has fallen very rapidly, so that at the end of last session there were few physically fit men left except those under age and in attendance in the earlier years. Of all the Faculties, as might be expected, Applied Science seems to have suffered most. In one of the Eastern universities the attendance was smaller last year by 75% than at the opening of the war, and in the same University

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the registration of men students in Arts fell to 65%.

So great has been the demand for medical officers that several of the universities held Summer Sessions in 1916-17 instead of the regular winter session for the graduating year in order that as many men might be sent to the front as possible immediately.

The decline in numbers has involved these universities in serious financial difficulties, particularly as the increase in cost of materials has risen.

At the beginning of the war the Officers' Training Corps, which had been organised on a small scale in one university, was established in most universities under the direction of members of the staff who had former military experience. Allowances were made as to academic standing and through this organisation a very large number of men were trained and a supply of officers provided.

The famous Princess Patricias Regiment was reinforced by members from the Universities; also special university artillery units were established, and military schools of instruction in Infantry, Musketry and Signalling were maintained with the help of former university instructors. The Faculty of Medicine of six universities made notable contributions by sending University Hospitals to the front as well as ambulances. These Hospitals were manned by some of the most distinguished surgeons and physicians of the Dominion, and were generously equipped by alumni and friends. They have done excellent service.

Sera and antitoxins were manufactured in the university laboratories for the armies at the front. Furthermore, wounded or incapacitated soldiers who are now returned are cared for in hospitals in which the university staffs serve, and a most recent development is that of the re-education of the returned soldier conducted in university buildings by psychological and medical specialists. This bids fair to become an important development.

The universities have set aside large portions of their buildings, residences and dining-halls, and even lecture-rooms for military uses. For example, the Imperial Royal Flying Corps of England has its headquarters in the University of Toronto and it is a matter of extreme satisfaction to have had since the summer hundreds of American cadets in the uniform of the United States living in our buildings and drilling on our grounds with our own soldiers. Moreover, quite a number of officers who are graduates of the universities and who have returned from the front wounded with long leave have been loaned to American Universities to give military instruction during the present winter.

On the scientific side the war has given a new impetus to the development of universities particularly in regard to the necessity of a greater application of science to industry. The Government at Ottawa has appointed a Board of Scientific and Industrial Research on which some of the leading scientists of the different universities are serving, and it is expected that this co-operation between the Universities and the industries will continue and be developed under the influence of this Board.

An inevitable result of the war will be that we shall have in the next generation an insufficient supply of our own men to do the work of science for the country. The universities have given so prodigally of their best that we shall suffer a lack of highly equipped men. This loss is irreparable. But will not this loss be compensated for by the enduring possession that will be ours in the rebirth of idealism through the sacrifice of so much of the best ? It is as creators of intellectual and moral idealism that universities fulfil their supreme purpose. The average man may be persuaded to approve the expenditure of vast sums on the scientific equipment because he has come to see that science prepares the road for material progress. But such as he can never in this spirit be the true supporters of a great university. The universities perform their noblest function and are of most enduring value to the community as the inspirers of idealism in youth and in becoming homes for those who will keep brightly burning in the nation the zeal for knowledge and for the pursuit of truth, and who are on the alert to discover in their students those to whom they may in confidence commit the sacred torch. Idealism gives new life to universities; by its revival they have been rejuvenated through the centuries. This war again has called forth heroic idealism in the youth who sat the truth in the conflict and have been obedient to it even unto death, and in this magnificent inspiration the universities of Canada will renew their strength.